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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. ARMS PROCUREMENT BILL

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage January 04 on revisions to the Labor Insurance Statute Wednesday by the Legislative Yuan. Most papers also reported on possible locations, Los Angeles or Miami, for President Chen Shui-bian's upcoming transit in the U.S. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" said that Taiwan can no longer play a military role for the United States in the Western Pacific; and how the U.S. pressure on President Chen Shui-bian, a Taiwan independence supporter, for the passage of the arms deal, confuses Taiwan people. The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" editorialized that Washington and Tokyo should look squarely into China's arms buildup and initiate a collective regional security system to cope with the rise of a military, expansionist China. End summary.

A) "A Total Reflection of Taiwan-U.S. Relations from the [U.S.] Arms Deal"

The conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (01/04) that:

"The [U.S.] Arms Procurement Bill was finally sent to committee for review, since leaders of the ruling and opposition parties cannot endure the U.S. pressure. Now is the time to review the bill and [Taiwan's] national defense policy; it is also the time to reflect on Taiwan-U.S. relations.

"The critical point in the review of the arms deal and Taiwan-U.S. relations is that both the Taiwan and U.S. sides should inspect again the implicit statement that 'Taiwan is the anti-Communist military outpost of the United States in the Western Pacific.'

"The United States surely hopes that Taiwan can still play a certain role in countering the PRC regime. The role that Taiwan can play, however, is definitely not of a military kind. The most advantageous strategic target for the United States is definitely not the chimera that Taiwan will win after a war breaks out between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, but the goal to eliminate fundamentally every possibility for a war between Taiwan and China. Hence, the United States should help Taiwan to establish a peaceful and stable interactive cross-Strait framework in Taiwan's development of democratic politics as well as economic and trade exchanges. ...

"... The reason why the U.S. arms deal is in a stalemate is because the Taiwan people question the 'legitimacy of governance' of the Chen Shui-bian regime; the stalemate also leads to the re-evaluation of Taiwan-U.S. relations. A relevant thought is, do Taiwan-U.S. military relations represent a reliable promise of Taiwan's survival and development? And is the amount of arms procurements equal to the status of bilateral relations? Is an arms deal a [form of] 'political insurance'? Should there be more comprehensive and long-term consideration for Taiwan-U.S. relations other than

military relations, or beyond military relations?

"As for Taiwan, it cannot use military means to solve cross-Strait issues. Hence, Taiwan must change from a role of 'anti-Communist military outpost' to 'platform of economic and trade exchanges' to act in the best interests of geo-political and political-economic strategies. Also, because of this, Taiwan's mainstream public opinion finds a fundamental paradox in the U.S. push for arms sales through the Chen Shui-bian regime, which asserts Taiwan independence. This is because Taiwan independence means war, but the purpose of Taiwan's arms procurements is not Taiwan independence. Since the Chen Shui-bian regime has lost the 'legitimacy of governance,' it has also lost the 'legitimacy of an arms deal.'"

B) "PRC Arms Boost Cannot be Ignored"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (01/04):

"... The PRC's annual white paper on "China's National defense in 2006" released December 29 by the Information office of the PRC State Council revealed that the Chinese military budget had risen 14.6 percent, according to Beijing's own calculations, from the previous year.

"Although the PRC government maintained that its military expenditure remained lower than other major powers, such as Britain, France, Germany and Japan, the U.S. Department of Defense estimates that Beijing's real military expenditure was two or three times the officially reported figure, or somewhere between US\$70 billion and US\$100 billion.

"The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimated in its 2006 yearbook that China's military expenditures in 2005, expressed in purchasing power parity in constant 2003 U.S. dollars,

were actually second in the world at a level of US\$188.4 billion, surpassed only by the United States itself with US\$478.2 billion.

"By comparison, Taiwan ranked 15th with US\$13.4 billion. ...

"... We hope that leaders of the opposition and former ruling Chinese Nationalist Party, including KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, who formerly was a MAC vice-chairman, take a serious look at the new PRC position paper and the continued offensive expansion of the PRC military.

"We welcome the decision of the KMT to end its boycott of over two years of the proposed arms procurement budget tomorrow that will finally allow proper legislative review of the package, which we should note was first proposed to Washington by the then-KMT government itself in the mid 1990s. However, KMT leaders including Ma have refrained from commenting on Beijing's new reaffirmation of its intention to maintain a rapid pace of military expansion, a position which exposes the naivete of his own calls for Taiwan to rely for its security on China's goodwill, as manifested in his proposal to exchange a verbal commitment by Beijing to promise not to attack Taiwan if Taiwan abandons its independence and his statement of intent to distance Taiwan from the U.S.-Japan security alliance.

"As a presidential hopeful, it is incumbent on the KMT chairman to offer our citizens a more forthright policy on how to cope with this threat to our own independence and security.

"Indeed, for the sake of regional security and the survival of democracy in East Asia, we urge Washington and Tokyo to squarely face this challenge and initiate a collective regional security system, which we believe should include Taiwan, to cope with the rise of a military expansionist China."

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